

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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R 101706Z APR 75

FM AMEMBASSY LISBON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2447

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMCONSUL LOURENCO MARQUES

AMCONSUL LUANDA

AMEMBASSY MADRID

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME

USMISSION NATO

DIA WASHDC

USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER

AMCONSUL OPORTO

AMCONSUL PONTA DELGADA

C O N F I D E N T I A L LISBON 2067

ROME FOR ILLING

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PO

SUBJ: THE CHURCH AND THE ELECTIONS

REFS: (A) LISBON 1810 (NOTAL); (B) LISBON 1210

SUMMARY: FAR FROM WILTING IN FACE OF MOUNTING LEFTIST ATTACK,
PORTUGUESE CHURCH HIERARCHY HAS CLOSED RANKS AND DECIDED ON
APPROPRIATE TACTICS TO FOLLOW IN REGARD TO CHALLENGES IT FACES.
CHURCH HOPES TO MOBILIZE FAITHFUL TO TURN OUT EN MASSE FOR
ELECTIONS AND PLANS GIVE THEM APPROPRIATELY DISCREET ADVICE.
END SUMMARY.

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1. PORTUGUESE EPISCOPAL HIERARCHY IS CURRENTLY MEETING IN FATIMA, WITH ALL MAJOR CHURCH FIGURES PRESENT. CONFERENCE WILL TERMINATE APRIL 12, AT WHICH TIME (ACCORDING TO PRESS REPORTS) COMMUNIQUE WILL BE ISSUED.

2. ACCORDING TO MSGR. MARION OLES OF NUNCIATURA, AT END OF CONFERENCE BISHOPS WILL ISSUE PASTORAL LETTER ADVISING FAITHFUL OF CHURCH'S POSITION ON ELECTIONS. LETTER'S THEME WILL BE SIMPLE AND UNASSAILABLE: VOTE. FOLLOWING SAME LINE AS THAT TAKEN PREVIOUSLY BY HIERARCHY, AND RESTATED APRIL 7 BY CARDINAL PATRIARCH IN INTERVIEW WITH PARIS NEWSPAPER "FIGARO," LETTER WILL NOT SUPPORT ANY POLITICAL PARTY.

3. INSTEAD LETTER WILL AIM TO GET ACROSS TO PARISHIONERS THE BASIC MESSAGE THAT VOTING ON APRIL 25 WILL BE AS MUCH A CHRISTIAN AS A CIVIC DUTY. WITH HELP OF LOCALLY-DELIVERED MESSAGES FROM PARISH PRIESTS, PARTICULARLY IN THE NORTH, HIERARCHY INTENDS TO COMMUNICATE TO THE FAITHFUL THAT CHRISTIAN VALUES ARE MENACED IN PORTUGAL TODAY. BY URGING PARISHIONERS TO VOTE, CHURCH INTENDS THAT THEY SHOULD VOTE FOR PARTIES WHOSE PHILOSOPHIES CONCORD WITH CHRISTIAN VALUES. PARTICULARLY IN THE NORTH, THIS WILL MEAN DISCREET SUPPORT FOR CDS AND PPD (MONARCHISTS COULD ALSO BENEFIT). AS FOR SOCIALISTS, HIERARCHY'S INCREASING RESPECT FOR THIS OTHERWISE SUSPECT (PHILOSOPHICALLY "MATERIALIST") PARTY MAY NOT FIND EXTENSIVE ECHO AT PARISH-PRIEST LEVEL.

4. WHILE CHURCH HIERARCHY IS VULNERABLE TO ATTACK FOR ROLE IT PLAYED UNDER OLD REGIME (AT BEST, IT OFFERED ONLY MUTED CRITICISM), DEVELOPMENTS OF RECENT MONTHS HAVE STIFFENED SPINES UNIVERSALLY. THE OUTSPOKENLY LIBERAL BISHOP OF OPORTO HAS SIGNALLED PUBLICLY (REF A) THAT HE SHARES SAME CONCERNS AT CURRENT POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS AS DO HIS BRETHREN. IN FACE OF CHALLENGE MOUNTED DIRECTLY AGAINST HIERARCHY (INVOLVING QUESTION OF CONTROL OF CATHOLIC STATION RADIO RENASCENCA), BISHOPS HAVE BEEN UNYIELDING. MSGR. OLES STATES THAT HIERARCHY IS DETERMINED NOT TO GIVE IN: EITHER RADIO RENASCENCA WILL BE GENUINE VOICE OF THE CHURCH, OR ELSE HIERARCHY WILL LET GOVERNMENT "TAKE IT OVER," TRADING OFF THE STATION TO THE GOVT IN EXCHANGE FOR SOMETHING ELSE. WHAT IS IMPORTANT IS THAT A RADIO STATION BROADCASTING IN THE NAME OF THE CHURCH BE A FAITHFUL REPRESENT-
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ATIVE OF WHAT THE CHURCH TEACHES AND THINKS.

5. COMMENT: PROBABLY THE SINGLE GREATEST THREAT TO PSYCHOLOGICAL ELECTORAL VICTORY BY DEMOCRATIC PARTIES IS MASSIVE ABSTENTION BY MEMBERS OF CONSERVATIVE, PARTICULARLY RURAL, "SILENT MAORITY." CHURCH'S GET-OUT-THE-VOTE MESSAGE REPRESENTS AN IMPORTANT EFFORT TO ASSURE THAT ABSTENTIONS DO NOT DISTORT TRUE DEGREE OF LEFT'S POPULAR SUPPORT. CARLUCCI

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